

Property Tax Relief

Skyrocketing property taxes are a burden on seniors because most live on fixed incomes. When taxes go up, often the standard of living and the ability to afford prescription medications suffers. Several bills we supported to reduce the tax burden on seniors passed the House this year, only to be defeated in the Senate.

However, there are property tax exemptions you may qualify for if:

- You are at least 61 years of age, or disabled.
- You own and live in a single-family home, mobile home, or condominium.
- Your combined household income does not exceed \$30,000 a year.

In addition, Washington has a program that allows homeowners to defer payment of property taxes on up to 80% of the equity in their primary residence until the home is sold. You might qualify for this deferral program if:

- You are 60 years of age or retired because of a physical disability, and
- Your income is \$34,000 per year, or less.

To find out if you qualify for a property tax exemption or deferral, call your county assessor:

San Juan County Assessor 360-378-2172

Skagit County Assessor 360-336-9370

Whatcom County Assessor 360-676-6790

1999 Senior Report

**Rep. Jeff Morris and
Rep. Dave Quall**
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

40th District

1999 Senior Report



**Rep.
Dave Quall**

Committees:

- Education (co-chair)
- Financial Institutions and Insurance
- Rules

In Olympia:

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7800
quall_da@leg.wa.gov

In District:

1330 A South 2nd St., Ste.103
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 428-1023



**Rep.
Jeff Morris**

**Democratic
Floor Leader**

Committees:

- Economic Development, Housing, and Trade
- Technology, Telecommunications, and Energy
- Transportation

In Olympia:

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7970
morris_je@leg.wa.gov

In District:

227 North 4th St., Ste. 204
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 416-7085

Dear Neighbors,

Improving and maintaining the quality of life for senior citizens is a top priority for us.

During the 1999 Legislative Session, more than 65 pieces of legislation designed to meet the interests of seniors were introduced. These bills addressed issues such as making health care more affordable, boosting the salaries of care-givers, reducing property taxes, and lowering utility rates.

Many of these measures were passed into law, but the fight isn't over. We will continue to work with like-minded lawmakers in the House to get key pieces of legislation onto Governor Locke's desk.

Among our priorities for next session are:

- Fairer taxes for seniors
- Health care reforms, including the Patients' Bill of Rights
- Improvements to our system of nursing homes and long-term care
- Protection of your personal privacy.

Please call or write if you have ideas about these issues, or about other reforms that the Legislature should adopt. As always, we appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Jeff Morris

Rep. Dave Quall



Focus on Health Care

Nothing is more precious than your health. You can't put a price on it or replace it. In a country as great as ours, no one should die or suffer from an illness due to a lack of health care coverage.

That is why we strongly supported a number of efforts to safeguard the health of all seniors. Several bills were aimed at improving the services of nursing homes, boarding homes, and assisted living facilities. While many bills failed to pass, we did achieve some victories:

Boarding home inspections:

Extending the period that boarding homes can be inspected for quality.

Supplemental health insurance (Medigap):

Eased the purchase of supplementary health insurance to cover gaps in Medicare coverage.



Home-care workers' wages:

Lawmakers approved a state budget that gives state-provided home-care workers pay increases of 50 cents per hour in each of the coming two years. Getting and keeping quality home-care workers is crucial to effective long-term care. Boosting the salaries of workers will help attract more qualified care-givers who will stay on the job.

In-home services:

The Legislature also strengthened oversight of private health care-givers. We now require more criminal back-ground checks, training and monitoring for care-givers to reduce the possibility of the kind of abuse that an Everett woman is alleged to have suffered at the hands of her care-giver husband.

Added protection for "vulnerable adults" against abuse or exploitation by care givers or home administrators

Self-directed care:

Disabled persons can now care for themselves in their own homes by using personal aides paid for by the state. The personal aide does not have to be a health professional to qualify.

Therapy care:

We now allow extra therapy for patients under the age of 65, if the extra help will allow them to leave nursing homes.

Affordable Housing & Utility Bills

The costs of basic needs, such as adequate shelter, and affordable heat and light are a major concern for seniors. A new law allows private electrical and gas companies to offer reduced utility rates for low-income customers.

Transportation & Disabled Parking

Many seniors are unable to drive their own cars, so local and state agencies provide transportation for them. We voted to extend the state Agency Council for Coordinated Transportation (ACCT), which coordinates local and state services for persons with special transportation needs. We also supported eliminating bureaucratic red tape from the process to apply for disabled parking permits.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Seniors have an advocate and ally in the volunteer long-term care ombudsman program. The ombudsman resolves problems involving the rights of residents of care facilities as well as checks on the quality of the care provided. The ombudsman is able to advocate on behalf of the public when dealing with a state agency. In addition, in response to the case in Everett where Linda David allegedly suffered abuse by her care-giver husband, Gov. Locke has created a new Task Force to study and make recommendations on long-term care issues to the Legislature.

Consumer Protection

Government should be a consumer ally in today's information-based economy by providing safeguards against unwanted and unnecessary



intrusions into our private lives. We supported a package of consumer protection proposals dealing with financial and health care privacy. We were disappointed that many weren't even allowed a vote. Consumer protection and personal privacy will be issues in the coming session:

- Maintaining privacy of medical records;
- Prohibiting banks and other financial institutions from selling data about you; and
- Preventing shopping clubs, cable companies, and other retailers who keep track of your purchases to use information about you without your permission.

E-mail Network

We often use the Internet to send out electronic legislative newsletters. Those over the age of 65 are the fastest-growing group of Internet users. If you have an e-mail account and you'd like to receive information like this, send a message to have your e-mail address added to our growing network of interested citizens.

You can reach Rep. Morris at: morris_je@leg.wa.gov and Rep. Quall at quall_da@leg.wa.gov.

